

Communicating and Using Climate Survey Results

Climate Studies can provide helpful information about different indicators of a school's campus climate. This information can be used to educate the campus community and to inform a campus' review of the policies and practices they use to respond to and to prevent dating and domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. Making the most of the opportunities provided by conducting a climate survey first requires **the collection of trustworthy data** (for examples see: <https://www.notalone.gov/assets/ovw-climate-survey.pdf> and <http://socialwork.rutgers.edu/CentersandPrograms/VAWC/researchevaluation/CampusClimateProject.aspx>). Secondly, it is critical to **develop a thoughtful strategy about how to present findings to your community**. The following questions and guidance are intended to help Climate Study Committees and University Administrators ask important questions when they have conducted a campus climate survey and are making decisions about how to release and use information about the findings of the research.

For Climate Study Committees - Questions to ask as you prepare to discuss climate study results

<p>Who has ownership of the data?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the design phase of the study decisions should be made about who will have access to the actual data itself. • It can also be helpful to discuss who can request additional analyses and by what process. • If faculty are involved in conducting the study decisions, it is important to determine early in the process if faculty will be able to publish findings in peer review journals.
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<p>Who will write and speak about the results?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can be helpful to discuss whether findings will be used only internally by campus offices. If so, determine which offices will use the findings • Campuses may decide to release some findings more publically and some information in a more limited way. In this case, discussions will be needed about how to respond to community concerns about transparency and data that is not being shared. • If faculty members publish findings in peer review journals it can be helpful to talk about who will respond to media or conference presentation requests related to the study findings. Some requests may be best handled by the researchers, others by campus administrators or practitioners. • Make sure everyone who takes on a communication role understands the strengths and limitations of the research findings and is clear about the scope of what the findings say and what they don't. • Prepare talking points for people who will speak about the study and its findings. Prepare these with different audiences in mind (parents, students, alumni, faculty).
<p>What will your community use the data for?</p> <p>-To inform prevention, response and compliance approaches within different departments or units?</p> <p>-To inform members of the campus community (students, faculty, staff and administrators), parents, alumni, donors?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may want the data analyzed in different ways for different audiences. • Find ways to report the data that can be more directly used to inform policy. This will be a different set of analyses then those used for peer review articles. • You may want to start with face to face conversations with key administrators and stakeholders about what information will be released to whom and with what purpose. Have conversations on your campus about this even before data has been collected. • Develop talking points for the positive impact of findings. One of the most powerful aspects of climate surveys is that they can raise awareness and start conversations.

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prevention.innovations@unh.edu | 1-603-862-5023
www.cola.unh.edu/prevention-innovations-research-center

<p>What are your main take home messages?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think strategically about how you package pieces of the information you collected. This will make it easier to talk about policy and practice implications. It will ensure people pay more attention to the take home message of your work. • Defined messages can make it easier to more clearly outline the limits of that piece of data and how it should or should not be interpreted. For example, if you report information about both how many participants reported victimization and how many participants had a friend tell them about victimization, your audience may infer that both pieces of information tell you something about campus incidence. However, because this information can include so much overlap, with victims possibly telling more than one friend, it is not a good indicator of incidence. Reporting these pieces of information separately with, for example, one report on numbers of victims and their needs and another on friends who are disclosed to and want to support friends can make your presentation more clear. • You may have multiple target audience and while you may share similar information with them, the approach, presentation and slant on the message may vary greatly. • Be careful to avoid disciplinary jargon when communicating findings.
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<p>What formats will you use to share the findings?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many campuses prepare written reports that focus on summarizing the study design and findings. • Reports can also be more focused on policy and practice implications. • It can also be effective to develop presentations of the findings that can be shared at department meetings or in larger forums. • Findings from climate studies can also be a good springboard for facilitated discussions on campus that focus more on dialogue and discussion than presentations with question and answer sessions. • Shorter articles in campus journals, newspapers, or alumni magazines are also possible outlets.
<p>What should the report (s) look like?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present findings in a series of shorter reports rather than one long document. Examples include: http://cola.unh.edu/justiceworks/reports. This will give readers a clear take home message from each section of data collected. It can also help readers better understand the strengths and limits of a particular section of findings. • Consider combining climate report data with other information available on your campus. For example, you might want to combine climate survey data about use of resources with data from your local campus advocates or crisis center or other agencies about how many students used their services and disclosed a victimization.

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Who do you need to communicate with prior to the release of the data?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can be helpful to make a list of key stakeholders in your community. Often these individuals and groups are represented in your study planning group but if not it is good to lay out who they are and have a plan for connecting with them. Consider that different groups (administrators, students, parents) need different kinds of information. • Discuss who needs to hear about the findings first. For example, administrators such as the President or Provost or Dean of Student Affairs may want to be briefed on the findings prior to release to other departments and individuals. Provide them with the opportunity to provide insight and feedback. • Consider conversations with your campus media relations staff to discuss how to handle a press strategy.
How will reports and findings be distributed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a time line for when information will be released. This will help you prepare to respond to community questions about information that has been released. • Make a plan for whether reports will be sent to all members of the community via a directed communication email or made available to department heads to share with their units. If the latter, consider how your team ensure that information is being communicated correctly? • It can also be helpful to plan how you will gather and answer questions that community members and groups have about the findings. • Have conversations about whether press releases will be made to the school paper and/or outside media?
How are you going to respond to people who are challenging your findings?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having conversations with subject matter experts on your campus or regionally can help your committee craft talking points. • Having information about how your data compares to national data can be helpful as a means of contextualizing the information that you present

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For Campus Administrators - Questions to ask as you prepare to respond to climate study results

How do you use the data to highlight the positive/proactive things that you are doing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Climate surveys can include questions that tap into strengths and resources on campus. This data can be used to highlight awareness.• Incidence rates themselves often increase following prevention and awareness efforts as victims feel more comfortable coming forward.• Connect data to regional and national statistics to provide context. We know that these problems occur on every campus. Campuses that are more aware of both the scope of the problems and their campus strengths and resources are in a better place to respond effectively.• Release of climate study findings can be a good opportunity to raise awareness about campus, as well as community, resources and efforts to address this issue that are already in place.
How do you use the data to highlight the areas that are in need of change and attention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Campuses have reported findings including incidence rates and showcased climate surveys as evidence that they are taking these issues seriously on their campus.• Highlight implications of findings for policy and practice changes. Include talking points about campus change efforts to address information learned in the study.
How do you put your local findings in the context of national cases/data?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Find the subject matter experts on your campus or regionally. These people can help you place your local findings in the context of regional or national statistics.

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<p>Who are the people who will respond to media inquiries?</p> <p>What is your media plan and knowledgeable people that can handle calls from media?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to disseminating the findings, meet with campus media relations so that they have an opportunity to see the report(s) and can help you plan a strategy for and talking points for media inquiries. • Have a plan of action about where inquiries should go and talking points for those who will respond.
<p>How are you going to respond to individuals who are using false data or misconstrued data to counter the findings both in and outside of the institution?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with subject matter experts as well as the campus police/security officials and local law enforcement to develop succinct, fact driven responses
<p>How do you use information to mobilize community response?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before releasing findings alert the first responders (e.g., counseling center, residential life personnel, health services) to determine if they want to highlight strategies that they are using to reduce victimization and perpetration. The awareness created by releasing the findings may also encourage victims to come forward so offices want to be prepared to meet their needs. • Work with constituents to review the findings to determine potential policy or practice changes that might result. • Find or create opportunities to create community dialogues and discussions.
<p>Who is in your community and who do you anticipate hearing from?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When findings are released you should anticipate that you may hear from many different groups on and off campus including undergraduate and graduate students, parents, alumni, local community members. Anticipate their questions and concerns. • Prepare talking points for different audiences and constituency groups.

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<p>How will you acknowledge underserved populations and any limitations of your findings based on who responded to the survey?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A big concern with climate studies is how well they describe the experiences of different community members, especially historically marginalized groups. • For campuses with small percentages of underserved populations (e.g., students who identify as LGBTQ) the committee and campus administration will need to determine if they would like to oversample these groups so that there is enough data to report on their experiences. • If experiences of these groups are left out due to lack of data it may be helpful to partner with organizations on campus to find other sources of information about these community members' experiences so that policy and practice implications can be considered for all members of the community.
<p>What does transparency look like?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to forming the committee and administering the survey, the members of the committee and the administration need to come to an agreement that this is a research project and that the outcomes whether positive or negative will be presented in a fair manner. • Plan strategies that prioritize transparency. Consider the implications of a lack of transparency in sharing the findings. This can have a negative impact on creating campus changes.

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